BIOLOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES DEBATE

STEM CELL RESEARCH, A GIFT OR A CURSE?

As a class, we will be conducting a debate regarding a modern, controversial technology: stem cell research. The class will be divided into three groups: those for stem cell research, those against stem cell research and the judges. You will draw your positions from a hat, after which you will get together with your groups to begin working on your tasks. The judges, in the end, are the deciding party, where the groups for or against are trying to persuade the judges to continue or to put a stop to stem cell research.

BEFORE DEBATE DAY

1. **Positions for or against stem cell research**

Students in either the FOR or AGAINST groups must prepare a set of arguments, with relevant evidence, to dispute their position. You will want to have anywhere between 6-8 arguments, which you must draw from your own research (make sure you have a good idea of what stem cell research is, what it involves and the different types of stem cell research). Include scientific, moral, ethical and Christian evidence for or against the topic based on the position assigned to you. You can also draw on the material covered in-class.

You may want to assign the following roles in your groups to make the task easier: leader, who will make sure all members stay on task and set the time frame; researchers, who do the research behind the topic and find a good collection of evidence to share with their group members; compilers, who put the information into a single well-organized document; and presenters, who, on the day of the debate, will present the arguments and evidence. Although you may have independent tasks, make sure that the entire group decides on the arguments and evidence you will use to argue your case.

The document outlining your arguments and evidence must be submitted for marking. Only one document is necessary per group.

1. **The Judges**

For those of you who have been assigned the role of judge, you will have a set of different tasks to work on than the opposing sides. You must compile a brief summary defining stem cell research, what it involves, the different types of stem cell research etc. You will also outline the current position Canada takes towards stem cell research and why is takes that particular position and you will outline the current Catholic Church’s position on stem cell research. You must submit this information in a well written, one-page report for marking. After the debate, you will make a decision, based on the arguments and evidence provided by your fellow classmates, whether to put an end to stem cell research or continue with it. Write a paragraph as to the decision you made and why, and attach it to your report.

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ON DEBATE DAY

On the debate day, we will be following this schedule:

5MIN: Each group introduces themselves, and their positions.

10MIN: Judges call the debate to order. The judges will outline the key elements of stem cell research and the different types as well as present the current position on stem cell research of both the Canadian government, and the Catholic Church.

10MIN: The FOR team will present their arguments and evidence.

10MIN: The AGAINST team will present their arguments and evidence.

20MIN: Rebuttal period, where any member of either opposing positions may raise questions, find flaws with the opposing arguments, or further promote their position with additional evidence.

10MIN: Judges leave to discuss the arguments and come to a decision.

15MIN: Judges announce their decision, and we discuss this result, and how the quality of the debate as a class.

EVALUATION

**Knowledge/Understanding-** A good background knowledge of the technology behind stem cell research.

**Thinking-** for opposing teams, used critical thinking to come up with appropriate arguments, with strong evidence; for the judges, used critical thinking to make a decision based on arguments

**Application-** Connected the topics to real world applications as well as to political issues in Canada and the Catholic Church

**Communication-** Well written, clear reports; Well organized and clearly articulated presentation; respectful of other presenters.